



Progress Education is an achievement management, professional services company helping educators raise the performance of the students they serve.

We Optimize Student Performance

Volume 1 Issue 2

Dear Education Enthusiast,

As we round the corner into Spring, we do so bringing you the second edition of the Progress Education quarterly newsletter. In case you missed the inaugural edition, our goal is simple: This newsletter is designed to update, inform and educate you, as well as help you decide how to best use the many Progress solutions within your organization.

Our second newsletter focuses on the billions of dollars spent in schools and districts across the country, and the question that educators find themselves constantly faced with: Are we spending wisely? Progress Education not only has the answer to this question, but also a proven solution that helps districts track how funds are expended.

We hope you find this newsletter informative, and as always, we thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm for the solutions offered by Progress Education Corporation.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas P. Jandris, Ph.D.
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Progress Education Corporation

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Are We Spending Our Money Wisely, and How Do We Know?

There is a series of three questions for which, if we could provide valid and reliable answers to educators and other stakeholders, the outcomes of our educational efforts would be positively transformed for all children and learners.

They are, simply:

- What works over time?
- For which students?
- At what cost?

There is no dispute that we already have the technological ability using accounting, student information, and performance measurement systems to gather, aggregate, disaggregate, analyze,

and report on each of those questions. In fact, much of the baseline data already exists in silos in schools, districts, and states across the country. So, why aren't we putting this compelling knowledge in the hands of educators at every level in order to truly empower them to engage in differentiated instruction and reallocate resources in order to be able to afford to?

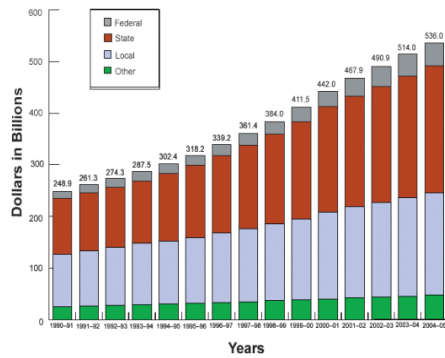


Whether the reference is to an individual, a family, a corporation, or a government, it is a fact that "we spend our money where our (true) values are. The sad truth is that for decades, maybe longer, educators in this country have spent their money in ways that may be compliant, as though that is the highest value; or have spent their money on patronage hiring, or have spent their money on "favorite son" purchasing; or to pacify the various interest groups, and/or politicians - but rarely have they spent their money on PROVEN instructional resources, strategies and/or processes that accomplish and accelerate mission achievement - the acceleration of student performance for each child!

The Institute of Education Sciences has identified the following goals for its Education Finance, Leadership, and Management program: (1) identifying finance, leadership, and management practices that are potentially effective for enhancing the teaching and learning environment and thereby improving student outcomes (e.g., student learning, high school graduation and dropout rates); (2) developing new finance, leadership, and management practices; (3) evaluating the efficacy of finance, leadership, and management practices; (4) providing evidence on the effectiveness of finance, leadership, and management practices implemented at scale; and (5) developing and testing cost accounting tools and measurement systems that will enable education administrators to link student-level resources to student-level achievement data.

In order to do so, indeed in order to answer the questions from above, we must once and for all provide the tools and incentives for educators to engage in an analysis of resource allocation utilizing the principles of cost accounting by program, by function, and by location (at the very least). We must take advantage of effective, user friendly systems for application from the classroom level to the State House that require educators to justify (that is, be held accountable for) their spending as a function of mission accomplishment - student achievement.

Over the past decade, numerous problems have been noted with respect to using per-pupil expenditure data that are aggregated at the district- or school-level for answering questions related to how schools can make better use of their resources to improve student learning (National Research Council, 1999). School-level per-pupil expenditure data collapse expenditures across students receiving different services, and when these data are associated with school-level student achievement scores, the data do not enable administrators to make informed decisions about the allocation of resources in ways that are meaningfully linked to student learning. The Institute of Education Sciences is interested in encouraging the use of practical, cost accounting tools or measurement systems that will allow schools and districts to track *student-level resources* in ways that will enable administrators to make resource allocation decisions that are tied to student learning outcomes. As noted in a National Research Council report (1999), "traditional function and object categories that were developed to track revenues and expenditure data for fiscal auditing purposes do not represent a particularly useful lens on educational activity when the focus shifts to what schools strive to do instructionally and how they do it" (p. 318).



The 50 states and DC educated over 48 million students in the year 2002 and spent over \$443 billion in Federal, State and local funds. The real crisis is that a district's ability to accurately account for the money in the fullest sense is problematic at best. Standard and Poors, in a 2004 report for the NCES stated that the measures of success were not based on output, but revolved around compliance. Until recent years, the K-12 accrediting bodies have all focused on compliance measuring such things as books in the library or staff ratios to determine achievement and accreditation status of a school or district.

Standard and Poors attempted in 2003 and 2004 to move toward an output model. In a 2004 report for NCES, Martin Hampel reported the following:

“For many years the school system in the United States has measured success by the number of dollars spent, computers and textbooks purchased, and programs created. Moreover, the measures of success have not focused on academic achievement. Since 1965, American taxpayers have spent more than \$321 billion in federal funds on K-12 public education, yet the average reading scores for 17-year-olds have not improved since the 1970s, according to the U.S. Department of Education. In an era where standards, testing, and accountability are at the forefront of the education community, parents, educators, administrators, legislators, and stakeholders are requiring an objective way of ascertaining the progress of public schools throughout the United States. There is a rich body of literature studying the relationship between resources spent on education and educational outcomes such as performance on achievement tests, graduation rates, and other assessment indicators. Since there are several hundreds of studies investigating this topic, it is quite impossible to provide an exhaustive review of the literature, and any overview could not be comprehensive. However, a recent book by Armor (2003) provides a fairly representative synopsis of various groups of studies and ongoing discussions, in particular, investigations looking into a “production function” approach, i.e., the relationship between “input” variables, such as spending, and “output” indicators, such as performance on standardized tests. Armor had worked as a graduate student on the classic “Coleman” study (Coleman et. Al 1966), which pioneered the identification of the relationship between socioeconomic background and student performance. His main thesis states that these family effects are greater than school grade level achievement, and therefore any influence of spending variables is typically less pronounced. Another literature review can be found in Monk, Walberg, and Wang (2001). Schweke (2004) provides an additional overview.”

The following statement comes from a report titled *The Information Dimension of Education Financing Decisions: Data Needs, Systems and Strategies* by Cresswell and Dawes at the Center for Technology in Government, March 2004.

..., despite their pervasiveness and cost, existing K-12 reporting requirements and information systems do not capture information about the processes of schooling; that is, the ways in which revenue, other resources and policies are combined in the school setting to produce results. To return to the simple representation of schooling stated earlier: inputs (people, policies, and resources) are transformed via processes (both managerial and educational) to produce outputs (grades and graduation rates) and outcomes (well-prepared citizens). Current information resources can be mapped against the elements of this simple formula to determine where gaps exist.

Progress Solution: **EdCost**
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How Can Progress Education Help?

Progress Education has developed a process supported by proprietary technology, EdCost, which allows districts to clearly identify from the general ledger how funds are expended at the district and school level. The software is easily incorporated by the district and provides a variety of reports that provide a strong management tool for districts to determine the return on investment by program. The reports currently fall into five categories; instruction, instructional support, operations, leadership, and other commitments. This product forms the basis of a comprehensive NCLB decision-making tool for districts and schools. The central issues are: where does the District spend its money; and, how effective are the programs at what cost? Data concerning return on the taxpayer's dollars will allow districts and schools to make decisions that produce results and that are cost effective.



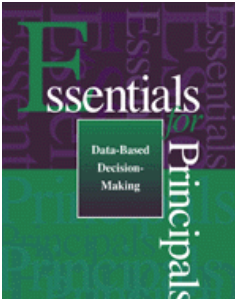
Attending ASCD in Chicago? Checkout the ProEd "Meet the Authors" Reception

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) is holding its annual conference and exhibit show April 1-3, 2006 at McCormick Place – Lakeside Center in Chicago, IL. This year's conference, titled *Constructing the Future, Challenging the Past: Excellence in Learning, Teaching, and Leadership*, promises to be one of the best yet. Attendees will have the opportunity to explore the breadth and depth of education, in more than 600 sessions, including:

- What it takes to create better schools.
- How to improve programs for teaching and learning.
- Which education approaches are most likely to work?
- How to build stronger learning communities.
- Which practices ensure that all students are learning?
- How to get results.
- What to question about traditional practices.

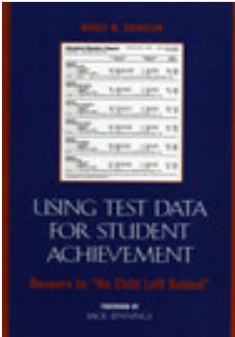
As if there isn't enough to do in Chicago, Progress Education Corporation is hosting a "Meet the Authors" wine and cheese reception from 4:00 - 5:30 pm on Saturday, April 1st, 2006. Conference attendees are invited to stop by before the Illinois ASCD Social Reception to enjoy a glass of wine and ask the authors questions about using data to improve student achievement. All attendees will receive a FREE copy of each of the author's books (a \$44.90 value).

The session will be presented by:



Dr. Thomas Jandris – “Data Based Decision –Making: Essentials for Principals”

This monograph by Dr. Thomas Jandris, prepared under the sponsorship of NAESP and the Educational Research Service, explores the leadership challenges for principals. The current interest in assessment data is motivated by the demands of accountability; but the real power of data is unleashed only when assessment is infused throughout a school’s culture.



Dr. Nancy Sindelar – “Using Test Data for Student Achievement”

This practical guide will provide educators with a step-by-step process for gathering and using local test data to increase student achievement before students are required to take high stakes national and state assessments. National and state assessments have produced an abundance of data regarding the strengths and weaknesses of student achievement. However, to date, little has been written to guide educators regarding the use of this data to increase student achievement.

For More Information:

ASCD Annual Conference

<http://www.ascd.org>

“Data-Based Decision-Making: Essentials for Principals” by Dr. Thomas Jandris

<http://web.naesp.org>

“Using Test Data for Student Achievement” by Dr. Nancy Sindelar

<http://www.rowmaneducation.com>

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